

MARK POCAN
2ND DISTRICT, WISCONSIN

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

ASSISTANT WHIP



10 EAST DOTY STREET, SUITE 405
MADISON, WI 53703
(608) 258-9800

313 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2906

POCAN.HOUSE.GOV

UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 25, 2014

Dr. Tony Evers
Superintendent of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841

Dear Dr. Evers:

I am writing in support of the Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) full compliance with the Department of Justice's examination into potentially discriminatory practices occurring within the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program.

Throughout its tenure, the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program has elicited serious complaints regarding discrimination against students with disabilities, but recent allegations are especially egregious. I have closely followed reports that the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program discriminates against students with disabilities during the admissions process. Allegations made by families, Disability Rights Wisconsin, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin assert that private schools participating in the voucher program have instituted policies which create barriers for students with disabilities and intentionally block them from school admission. Additionally, concerns have been raised that some students with disabilities have been expelled or forced to leave voucher funded schools as a result of school policies that do not accommodate their needs.

According to the *Milwaukee Sentinel Journal*, in 2011, of the nearly 21,000 students attending private schools using a state-subsidized voucher 1.6% of students have an individual education plan identifying them as in need of special education services. This figure is especially alarming when considering that nearly 20% of the students in Milwaukee Public Schools have special education plans in place.

I encourage DPI's full and fair compliance with the Department of Justice's examination into this important issue. I am deeply troubled by these allegations and sincerely hope that DPI and the Department of Justice will work to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are upheld.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Pocan'.

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress